Sisterhood

Amanda Smith–Kevin Tully–Franklin Cincinnatus

Cover: *Tess* ©Amanda Smith

Amanda Smith is the founder and co-director of A Smith Gallery in Johnson City, Texas. She has been a photographer for over thirty-five years as well as a CPA. She used both her knowledge of photography and business skills to create the gallery 15 years ago. Amanda has been a champion of photography, photographers, and the creative potential of the photographic process as a teacher, curator, promoter and judge for well over 200 juried and curated exhibitions in her own and others' galleries and online. From a beginning in traditional darkroom photography, her work is now primarily digital with creative analog and alt-process additions. Her artworks in this portfolio, her "sisters," are imaginative photocomposites.

Kevin Tully is Amanda's co-director and creative partner for A Smith Gallery and a photographer, designer, writer, and artist. With over thirty-five years of experience as a landscape designer, furniture designer, fine art painter, and photographer, he has taught workshops on various aspects of art and photography for over twelve years. He has curated and installed hundreds of exhibitions for the gallery and has been a juror for numerous calls-for-entry for the gallery and local organizations, as well as international exhibitions. Kevin and Amanda are each others' first, best critics and collaborators.

Franklin Cincinnatus. According to a bio from an old "Paris Review" that Kevin found among the magazines at the shop where he gets his oil changed, Frank was born physically and cognitively adult. His frightened parents left him at a fire station at 3:00 AM and disappeared, no forwarding address. A very liberal local librarian rescued him, naming him after Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Lucius Quinctius Cincinnatus. The "child" read most of *In Watermelon Sugar* that first night. It is conjectured that he lives in a little stone house in Central Texas with 3 cats, a bird, a very happy woman, and a pistol that he accidentally dropped in the toilet when drunk one Columbus Day. The pistol, rusted and useless, sits next to a framed photograph of the librarian. Frank contributes the image commentaries for this issue's portfolio section and adds assorted illuminating remarks to the artists' interview.

“Beatrice liked to stand just outside the screen porch in the wind. She discovered if she stood just right, sideways to the wind, she could make whistling sounds with her ear. She claimed her ear was acoustically similar to a very small French horn. Her aunt, a merry spinster, was first chair French horn player in the El Paso Symphony. The family was very proud of her Aunt Emma’s musical talents, but annoyed at her claims of being a paramour of Pancho Villa. She kept a pair of rusty Spanish spurs on her fireplace mantel.

Beatrice could make various sounds at various pitches and tunings by slightly turning and tilting her head one way or another, similar to blowing into a tenor or soprano conch shell.

One day she realized if she put various widths of blades of grass in her ear she could make an entirely new panoply of sounds. Putting a very slender blade of Bermuda grass in her ear she noticed that all of a sudden a group of sparrows began flying around her ear. This continued for many days. If the sparrows had been able to speak English they would have explained to her that they decided she was the bearer of the ear that had been foretold…”

Beatrice

From “An Ear Foretold” By Franklin Cincinnatus

"Johnny Burke was excited, photographing outside after the first snow of 1946. The pure white, with twigs and grey grasses poking through, like Japanese ink drawings and prints. Simple beauty that required nothing of him. Nothing to decipher or fear. Yet he surprised himself. How could he want snow after all the suffering in the Ardennes? Somehow this snow, the snow of home was a pure thing, untainted by memory of horror. Unlike his buddies he carried home no photographs of Europe, or mademoiselles, or the final picture of a comrade. He knew the power contained in the waiting silver in a camera and chose not to awaken it.

Lucille called to him from the front porch. She had changed her dress for one more dramatic, fashionable. She wanted her picture taken. Her curly, typically wild hair tamed. He waved and nodded his head. As she turned to go back inside Johhny thought again how much he loved her, had missed her, but he was changed, different. He had things forced on him that were unnatural, horrible. Could what he knew now fit back into the life he left?

With the camera to his eye, he hoped she could not see his confusion…"

Lucille

From "Johnny Came Home" By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Marilyn lived in a house by the ocean. Her grandmother thought her odd. Her mother thought she was cute. She frightened her teachers.

Marilyn would tell stories of octopi and barracuda visiting her at her window. One late summer evening her mother and father heard a great crash in the front yard. Running outside to see what had happened they discovered the rear left side of the family car had been hit by something, causing a great dent in the fender and flattening a tire. Marilyn’s father angrily blamed “A kid at the wheel with a belly full of beer.”

Marilyn met her parents at the door, apologizing. She took responsibility, telling her parents that a great big whale had come to her window for a visit and that he must have backed away without looking. Her father became angry. Her mother grinned, uneasily.

The next evening Marilyn’s father took her by the hand and sat her on the couch, lecturing her on telling big tales and making up stories. She began to protest, but he refused to listen and sent her to her room.

Sitting on her bed crying she heard something at her window. Opening the window a familiar crow flew in, followed by a great school of the most beautiful pink and yellow and green fish. The crow introducing each one by name.

Her father came rushing into her room, soaking wet, with a beautiful pink and yellow and green fish in his front pocket. Her mother stood behind, her recent expensive coiffure soggy and ruined, grinning. The crow laughed….”

Marilyn

From “Marilyn Lived in a House by the Ocean” By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Esmeralda had wings. Yes, an undeniable personal phenomenon, but not as undeniable as her compulsion to gossip and utter shocking profanities when conversing with friends on the telephone.

Her sister, concerned for her reputation, gave her a crow. The crow was an accomplished mimic. She thought if Esmeralda could hear herself gossiping and spouting shocking profanities she would mend her ways. Nope, she simply was appalled by the crow’s behavior and moved him and his cage out to the garage.

The crow escaped, and through a multi-lingual intermediary, attempted to extort ten thousand dollars from Esmeralda, promising not to expose her gossip and profanity to the world if paid.

Esmeralda refused, pointing out that she had wings….”

Esmeralda
From “Wings” By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Edward Broomfield complained frequently about choosing to build his mansion close to the railroad tracks and the “filthy” men that would frequently knock on his door, embarrassed, hungry, asking for something to eat. Earnestine, his longtime housekeeper and cook, would sneak bologna and cheese sandwiches to the men behind the motorcar garage, modeled after the equestrian structures of Yorkshire, England.

Edward was an unhappy man. Many thought he had good reason. His beloved wife died unexpectedly on Armistice Day of 1918. He carried much guilt concerning this, as he was celebrating the end of the Great War with a relieved and rejoicing crowd on Main Street, leaving her alone. Tragically, his only child, Lillian, contracted the flu in the winter of 1919. She barely survived, her lungs severely damaged. Bedridden for the last six years of her life, she passed after a wasp entered her room through an open window, stinging her. The allergic reaction overwhelming her respiratory system, she died, also alone in her room…”

“Honestly, Rick, you want me to make a movie with a woman talking to her father as an apparition in wallpaper? I guess, kind of like the mirror in Snow White? You are really not serious?”

“Well, uh, yeah, yes I am.”….”

Lillian
From “The Apparition” By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Monsieur de La Fleur, in his seventh decade, sat each morning on a bench under a sweet chestnut tree in the Parc des Buttes Chaumont. He would bring course Toulouse sausages and a brioche along with one of the new Thermos flasks of heavily sugared coffee and the morning paper. Monsieur de La Fleur was the fourth son of Marshal de La Fleur, a rare hero of Napolean’s army’s loss at the battle of Waterloo. Monsieur de La Fleur carried a terrible scar across his right brow and cheek, causing his eye to sag and continuously water. He was a very handsome man otherwise. Always impeccably dressed. He received his scar fighting in the war of conquest in Algeria as a young cavalry officer. Although disfigured he was a man of good humor and generosity.

Camille was simple. She was a plain, very pale young woman. She loved apples. She would bring whole apples for the birds each morning, greeting them seriously with various names that changed from day to day. They cared nothing for the apples. She would sing sweet little tunes to the birds, turning in circles, holding tight to her hat. Monsieur La Fluer sat on his bench just beyond the wall that held the apples. He would greet Camille each day and clap as she sang and twirled. Camille addressed Monsieur De La Fleur as Mon Monsieur Matin.

Before she would go, Camille neatly lined the apples up on the wall and bid Monsieur de La Fleur adieu. The birds taking flight, then returning. Monsieur de La Fleur would finish reading the morning paper, rise and place bits of brioche on the wall for the birds, then collect the apples, placing them in his pockets to give later to a bouillon, a kitchen for the poor he passed on his way home….”

Camille
From “Apples” By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Elizabeth lives with her grandmother. She turns in the doorway to her grandmother’s bedroom,” said Callie Duryea, an actress, “Why does she turn in the doorway? It doesn’t say why she turns in the doorway. How can I make the moment real if I don’t know why she turns in the doorway?”

“Callie, sorry, I was just about to give you the backstory,” said Rudolf Spangler, the director. “You’re holding a script. You have read a script before? Ok, onward we go. Elizabeth lives….”

“You don’t have to be such a shit Rudy.”

“Did you have breakfast? A good Mexican breakfast would have done you good, good for a hangover. Remember, these things are always catered.”

“Ha, ha, ha, obvious why you have not directed a successful comedy.”

“Ok, enough. Elizabeth lives with her grandmother because…”

“You do realize my character’s name was Elizabeth in the last picture we did?”

“Can we please get through this Callie? I had to fight for you. The front office thinks you’re too old for this part. Please. Elizabeth, your character, lives with her grandmother in an upper-class, well-appointed home. The time is just after the end of World War Two. Her grandmother is…”

“Oh, and that aging bimbo you had in the last picture wasn’t too old for her part? For Christ’s sake she has a turkey neck.”

“Can I get you a glass of wine or a valium so we can get through this, damn… So, ok, the war is over and Elizabeth is standing in the doorway because….”

Elizabeth

From “Elizabeth’s Grandmother” By Franklin Cincinnatus

"Lettie Babineaux was born on an abandoned plantation on the East side of the Pascagoula River, on the road to Mobile. Her grandmother was a midwife and well-known healer. The old plantation house had been partially burned. Mother Sally, as she was called, was also born in the old house. Her father and mother moved into the partially destroyed, neo-classical home after the war.

The Babineaux family, the owners of the plantation, left after hearing about the Union victory in the battle of Mobile Bay and the occupation of Mobile, fearful for their lives. Their daughter died in childbirth just prior to the war. One son died in the battle of Plains Store in Louisiana. The other fought in the last battle of the war in The Battle of Palmito Ranch, fought on the banks of the Rio Grande in Texas. Rumor was he married a Mexican woman, daughter of a wealthy Hacendado, a Confederate sympathizer, and moved to Monterrey with his new bride. Both parents drowned when the paddle wheel boat they were traveling on caught fire and burned. They couldn't swim. There were no surviving heirs to the plantation.

Lettie grew up hearing and seeing things others didn't. She left the old plantation in 1955 and moved to New Orleans, telling fortunes, giving spiritual and career advice in Jackson Square. On Sundays she would hold court in Congo Square, connecting local people with their ancestors, that had once been bought or sold there. Lettie was always surprised by how many "white" folks, like her, showed up…."

Lettie

From "The Oracle of Congo Square" By Franklin Cincinnatus

"Khushi was a fine elephant. Her name meant happiness. However, Khushi was not happy when she was given as a gift to Sophia Burton. Sophia's Bengali attendant and favorite companion in Calcutta, Shakti, suggested the name, assuring Sophia that the elephant would grow into it. Khushi's mother had been killed in a crossfire of warring tribesmen when she was only two months old. Sophia's father, an important man in Calcutta in the waning years of the British Raj, thought the baby elephant would be a good companion for his occasionally homesick daughter. Although life in exotic India was exciting and magical, Sophia missed her mother's gardens and her best friend back in Surrey.

Khushi grew to be a fine, playful, and happy elephant. Sophia's father hired a Mahout named Kabir to care for Khushi. Sophia would take Khushi on long walks, telling her stories, which the English-speaking Kabir insisted on translating into Bengali for the elephant. Khushi learned various tricks and would trumpet for Sophia each morning. The young woman truly loved the elephant.

Then, early one hot summer morning Sophia was awakened by loud trumpeting, the trumpeting of many elephants coming from the jungle just beyond Khushi's barn. Sophia sprang from her bed. Kabir ran from the forest, telling Sophia that Khushi's family had come to take her home.

Sophia's father watched from his bedroom window. Kabir had done as he was asked. The troublemaker Gandhi was not going away…"

Sophia

From "Sophia's Journey" By Franklin Cincinnatus

“Jeanne could whistle. She whistled in her crib. She whistled on the playground at school. She was chosen to whistle “Oh Holy Night” and “Silent Night” along with her high school choir at the annual Christmas pageant. Upon graduating from college, she became a paid whistler for radio commercials and occasional popular recordings. Jeanne could walk unnoticed through a department store, but if she began whistling folks would gather round, asking for her autograph.

She met Harry Flynn, a tall Irish harmonica player, during a recording session. Harry was hired to replace her whistling part with harmonica on a Doris Day recording. Although annoyed with being replaced, she fell for the handsome Irishman. They married and she moved into his century old clapboard house on Long Island, built by his great grandfather, an oysterman and boat builder.

Shortly after, Harry insisted she discontinue her work as a whistler and concentrate on being a housewife. She agreed. She loved Harry very much. The years went by and Harry spent more and more time away from home. To ease her unhappiness Jeanne began whistling again.

Harry came home unexpectedly one evening and found Jeanne happily whistling in the kitchen. He demanded she go outside if she was going to whistle. She did and eventually befriended a murder of crows. They thoroughly enjoyed her whistling and even participated.

One early December morning the crows could hear Jeanne lightly whistling “Oh Holy Night” through an open kitchen window. Then they could hear Harry shouting at her as their voices got farther and farther away.

Harry’s lifeless body was found the next morning at the bottom of the front steps with very odd lacerations over his back and head, and markings in the lawn around the body that appeared to be left by some sort of bird…”

Jeanne

From “Jeanne Could Whistle” By Franklin Cincinnatus

“It was the days of flagpole sitting, marathon dancing, and rolling over Niagara Falls in a barrel. Tess Hoffmann learned to play the tuba from her father, a tuba player in the local Fireman’s polka band. Being naturally talented musically and very precocious, she took to the heavy instrument successfully and with enthusiasm.

The Great Depression was in full swing. Americans were stressed and sad. They needed challenges and entertainment and stunts to distract them. Tess was amused by the reporting on the couple that won a longest kiss contest. She decided that she was going to do something, something new and outrageous, like Archie Duggan and Emily Snodgrass, winners of the Milwaukee kissing contest.

Traveling to Dubuque with her father’s band to play a Fourth of July concert, sitting in her hotel room practicing, her neighbor began banging on the wall and screaming for her to stop. She kept playing. The couple in the room on the other side then began beating on the wall, loudly insisting she stop. She kept playing. The manager eventually, using his key, burst into the room, demanding she leave.

Shortly thereafter, realizing an opportunity, Tess began a tour of Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Iowa, staying in small motels and playing the tuba at inopportune hours. After a couple of months she was confident she held the record for the most motels kicked out of for annoying tuba playing. She brilliantly decided to place a bandage across her eyes so as not to visually engage the outraged motel guests and managers, possibly causing her to relent…”

Tess

From “Records” By Franklin Cincinnatus

Artists Interview - The Three of Them

The road is long and never straight. Tell your origin stories: background, first years, school days?

Amanda: Growing up in East Texas, I was surrounded by women who worked with their hands—shelling peas, crocheting, painting, knitting, sewing, cooking. I took it for granted but I found when I began making art as an adult I had absorbed much from them. I wanted to be a teacher, then I took a bookkeeping class and I became a CPA. I began photographing and working in the darkroom in my early forties. I was hooked. However, just making an image was not enough for me, I began working with pinhole cameras and eventually with encaustic on the images. I have hand colored on images, experimented with cyanotype, built tin boxes as frames, and now I am applying gold leaf to my composited images. It has been a wonderful, challenging, very fulfilling time in my life. Oddly, I do enjoy bookkeeping, too.

Kevin: Without the CPA there would be no gallery. I have been told I was always a bit odd. My best friend growing up was wildly creative. We were always doing something out of the ordinary for our age. I was an artist but didn't absolutely accept it until I was in my early thirties. I began my career as a landscape designer and contractor. I studied art and architecture in school, going back again at thirty. As a result of my ADD I have designed landscapes, designed and built houses, designed and built cabinets and furniture, and painted. However, I always thought I would be a writer, going back to the fourth grade. (Made me tired just writing that.) My photography journey started in 1980 when my roommate and I set up a darkroom in our kitchen. But I didn't really drill down into the art of it until I met Amanda thirteen years ago. The best thing that ever happened to me.

Franklin: Hard to follow show-offs. Hell, I'm just lucky to have three hot meals a day. If that librarian hadn't found me bawling

on the steps of the library I might have been raised by feral cats. Nothing against cats but hard to imagine writing in feline. That librarian was a sweetheart. She had me reading Steinbeck and Hemingway and Wolfe by the time I was four. Writing just always came natural to me. I was making ice cream money at eight writing obituaries for the local paper. I met Kevin in a Mexican restaurant in Austin. He was nursing a hangover with a plate of beautiful, greasy enchiladas and a tall horchata with rum. When he found out I could write he offered me a horchata and rum if I would write something and get him out of a jam. We've been inseparable ever since. I would rather not shower with him.

Kevin and Amanda

Frank

Any surprises, big decisions, turning points early on?

Amanda: Finding photography changed my life. A while back, looking at a box of my father's old photographs, I realized that he had a great eye. He knew where to place the camera. He could have been a very good photographer. Discovering this has given me a bit of a boost, as if maybe I was meant to pick up a camera. The life-changing, big decision I made was opening the gallery fifteen years ago. It never caused me any discomfort. It always seemed right. It has been a wonderful ride. Kevin showing up took the gallery to places it wouldn't have gone if it had been just me.

Kevin: I have had a very peripatetic lifestyle, living in various places working on construction sites, etc. The three pivotal moments in my life were going back to school, picking up a paintbrush, and meeting Amanda, finally settling down and using everything I had learned. Interestingly and thankfully, meeting Amanda, the photographer, fulfilled the thing I had always clung to since childhood, that one day I would be a writer. Buying that horchata for Frank definitely sealed the deal.

Frank: If you've ever been abandoned as an infant on the steps of a library, you'll know that it ain't cool. The librarian was my savior. I'll always cherish and never forget that spring afternoon when I was four and she handed me an old copy of "Look Homeward Angel" by Thomas Wolfe. It rocked my world. I still remember looking "insouciance" up in the big dictionary on a stand. I had to get up on a chair to do it. Spending a week in a South Texas County Jail was most definitely a pivotal moment. It provided me with new insights and material, characters, etc., and further cemented my distaste for white bread.

You closed the physical A Smith Gallery after 13 years. What's up now?

Amanda: The physical gallery is closed. All is online. The biggest difference is no brick-and-mortar exhibitions. Turns out online-only is much more work.

A local gallery is often a hang-out. Do you miss the community?

Amanda: Community is everything. The thing we miss most about not having the brick-and-mortar gallery is the loss of our physical photography community. We had something really special for thirteen years. We still are blessed with that community, but we miss the in-person interactions. The photography community writ large is phenomenal—supportive,

generous, caring, fun. We really appreciate the community for being so supportive of our business model. We would not exist without them.

Kevin: I second what Amanda said. Sharing stories and images and breaking bread with photographers from all over the world for all those years was an affirmation. Their sincerity and support then and now has kept us going. I have to also give a shout out to a group we are a part of, Shootapalooza. It is a photography family of alternative process photographers from across the country. The amazing projects and events experienced with these folks has been tremendously fun and inspiring.

Michael Finely exhibit

Frank: I was particularly drawn to the brownies and prosecco.

Artists' resumés are often full of jobs outside the arts. Yours?

Amanda: With my degree in accounting, I worked various corporate jobs but most of my career was spent self-employed. Have you ever been to a CPA's office? They are very silent and there is paper everywhere. I choose to revolt and start an art gallery. I took a continuing education class at the University of Texas from an inspiring instructor who made Fstops fun! I met some of best photography friends in those classes. We traveled together, shot together, and made art together. They were all in my grand opening gallery exhibition.

Kevin: I mentioned my early years on construction sites of one type or another. There are too many twists and turns to try to list here. I was a terrible employee, so most of my career has been spent self-employed. I tried to get a corporate job once, but the art gods knew better. I went back to school in my 30s, shooting for a doctorate in Architectural History and to teach at a small college. Unfortunately, life got in the way. Finding Amanda and the gallery has given me another gift. Teaching photography workshops has allowed me to exercise my latent teaching muscle. I got hooked on photography in 1980, in the kitchen darkroom, and I still have a print of my first decent photograph —of my then girlfriend coming out of a port-a-potty.

Frank: I don't have a good memory, but I sure had fun losing it. I wrote jokes once for a comic that paid me by letting me use his bank card. That possibly could be considered a corporate job? I've basically been self-employed since the obituary gig. I taught some kids in the library an appreciation for Kurt Vonnegut and Brautigan. Their parents were not amused. One of them grew up to write for *Mad Magazine*. Although I'm not a photogapher, I am inclined to lie and make up some wild tale about my photography adventures, but I'm tired.

Teaching was a big part of the bricks-and-mortar gallery. Do you still teach? What do you like about it? Anything not so much?

Amanda: Yes, I love teaching workshops and doing reviews and critiques. The interaction with the participants is affirming of what we do and it is fun to get to know folks from all over the world and their work. I have juried many competitions. It has always been an enlightening and informative experience. Getting to see more of what is happening in the photography world is great.

Kevin: I agree with Amanda, teaching workshops and doing reviews and critiques is wonderful. I really enjoy feeling like

we are in some way helping the scores of sincere folks we talk to. And conversely, we are also learning so much from them. I have also juried numerous competitions. I like the idea of actively participating holistically in the world of photography. Playing a part in the creative lives of photographers is gratifying.

Frank: I agreed to hold a creative writing workshop once. I'll never do that again. They all either wanted to write like Hemingway or Stephen King. I had them read Kerouac and Brautigan. I started with ten participants. Ultimately, I had only one. We still meet up for beers occasionally.

Visiting the neighboring gallery

Where do creative ideas come from? What helps? Music? Coffee? Meditation? Medication? Other?

Amanda: I usually start with a concept, but the final composited image is usually a bit different; that's just part of the creative process. Most of my work is made in the evenings, sitting on the couch with a cat in my lap watching something mindless on Netflix. There is usually a little prosecco or gin and tonic involved in the process.

Kevin: My most productive time is with coffee in the morning. My social media is loaded up with art and photography sites. I sit with my coffee and scroll. I can find inspiration just about

anywhere, reading a book, doodling, walking, listening to music. I developed a habit as a kid that I've carried with me all these years. I used to always have a small spiral notebook in my pocket to jot down or sketch whatever got my attention. I now use my phone. When I was younger late nights and tequila or scotch were a good combination. I also used to be able to work until one or two in the morning. Now I'm in bed by 9:30.

Encaustic workshop

Frank: I prefer to sit in a bar and observe the patrons, or read old encyclopedias in thrift stores, or watch videos about the sordid lives of famous writers and musicians, or engage people in lines, like lines at the grocery store or the pharmacy or McDonalds. People in lines are generally not happy. You learn a lot about human behavior in lines. I'm not a morning person. That old saying about drinking a lot of water before you go to bed after drinking is good advice. However, it does have complications as you get older. Very hot, black coffee is not only good, it is an imperative.

What do you do when a good idea fails? Revisit later? Cut your losses? Do you ever get blocked?

Amanda: Great question. Sometimes things just don't turn out like you see in your head. That's just part of the process. I have gotten good at putting images away that are not working, to be visited another day. And I do revisit them. There is always hope.

Kevin: I have a roll of unfinished canvases and a bunch of images waiting to be finished with new eyes. One of the gifts of the digital camera is the almost unlimited amount of shots. It allows us to experiment in the moment. And because of the potential of Photoshop, shooting in the digital age reminds me of collage-making years ago with a table full of cut-out magazine pages. Being blocked has never been problem of mine. There's always something else to work on.

Frank: Blocked, seriously, yes. But I learned years ago from reading Kerouac, just keep writing, even if it's pure gibberish. We are the master of our words and can elevate or kill them at will.

People like/love/wow your work. How important have reviews been to your success as writers, curators, photographers?

Amanda: Thank you. It has been incredibly helpful to have people, my peers, accept and comment on my work. The feedback from other photographers I respect has given me the encouragement needed to follow my muse.

Kevin: Yes, thanks. Art has no power, does not truly exist, in my opinion, until it is out in the world and a subject of conversation, desire, admiration, argument. Being able to hear the conversation is invaluable, but not always welcome.

Frank: I've been skinned so many times it's amazing I'm still held together. I had a retired English professor read one of my stories and criticize my spelling of metaphor and for using the phrase "Hard Scrabble." It was a seminal moment in my career, not.

Is there someone who sees your new work first? A reliable critic who "gets it?"

Amanda: Kevin.

Kevin: Amanda.

Frank: I have a Ouija Board and an old goldfish that I consult occasionally. My dog is not to be trusted. I used to bounce things off an old friend, Jim Slipper, but he unfortunately choked on a dry donut.

Collodion workshop

This series is quite a distance from traditional photography. What's the attraction in alt- techniques? Drawbacks? Cost? Stench?

Amanda: We have used encaustic in our creation of images and teach workshops. We have made cyanotypes. We have hand colored on images and encaustic and teach this also. Kevin teaches an acrylic alternative to encaustic workshop. We have had others teach wet plate and gum bichromate and hand coloring. I teach a gold leafing workshop. It has all been great fun. I have always been attracted to images that have the hand of the maker obvious as an integral part of the process. No drawbacks other than with everything there is a learning curve. We do have wax all over our studio. Time can be an issue. The expense is really pretty minimal. Gold leaf can get expensive. Encaustic has some ventilation issues.

Kevin: I love the idea of transforming an image with wax or paint or colored pencils or pastels or acrylic. We had a

section of the gallery devoted to alternative processes. It was great seeing how positively the public reacted to the work.

Frank: Sometimes, I enjoy spectating, other times not so much.

What role do social media and electronic publication play in your practice? Has "finished" stopped meaning "printed?"

Amanda: Finished has always meant “printed.” However, because of the practical need for galleries, etc. to go online, that has obviously changed. Social media is a necessary tool of the commercial gallery world and artists. When exposure is important, as it is, social media is a photographer’s, artist’s friend. The internet is useful. I still suggest that photographers print their work because ultimately the print is the thing and what is seen on the screen is not always what transfers to a printed image.

Kevin: What she said.

Frank: For years I kept reading “google” as “goggles.” It was all very confusing.

These days, anyone who does manipulated or experimental photography invites the loaded A.I. question. What's your opinion?

Amanda: I don’t use it. We don’t allow it in the gallery, yet. My jury is still out. But I do find it oh so fascinating.

Kevin: It’s almost not worth talking about anymore, it’s inevitable. I have been dead set against it. It’s either going to be just another tool in the artists kit or it’s going to have us living in caves in the desert.

Frank: I must take the fifth.

Things are getting weird in the US lately. The arts are far from exempt. Are you political?

Amanda: No, I work in a no politics zone. For me it is all about doing. Just being able to do and create and be without judgement or restraint.

Kevin: I'm congenitally political. Kind of important these days. Artists have traditionally played an important role in tumultuous times. Photography and photographers are indispensable in dangerous times.

Frank: Me, political? As far as I'm concerned everything is political. Even a story about or a photograph of a sunflower are now political. Will the sunflower survive the heat? Will a child be able to marvel at the tall sunflower?

What's in the future for you and yours? New initiatives? Experiments or projects we can help to advertise?

Amanda: Kevin recently created a new workshop "Discovering Your Personal Aesthetic." Amanda will be teaching her "Leafing, Kozo and Cold Wax" workshop numerous times during the new year. All the info concerning each workshop will be on the website as well as information concerning mentoring and portfolio reviews.

A Smith Gallery will be hosting Susan Burnstine's student exhibition this summer. ASG will also have an in-person exhibition, "Unique: Alternative Processes," in Dripping Springs at Creek Road Studio in the spring of 2026. Check out the gallery website for all "Upcoming Calls for Entry."

And Kevin and Franklin are working diligently on their substack which should be live in the next month.

One last question... Has anyone ever seen Kevin Tully and Franklin Cincinnatus together?

Only once. A bartender in San Antonio took a picture of them together and pinned it up in the Ladies Room at the bar. It was abruptly stolen.

Links

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https://asmithgallery.com/
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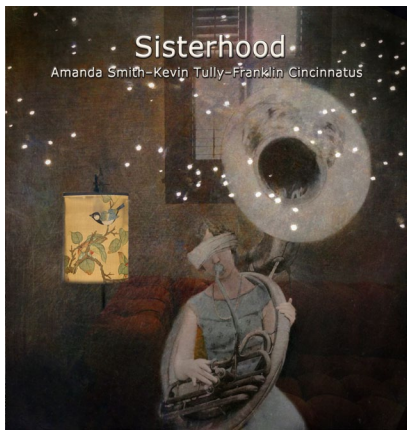

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